

with columnist **Fiona Walsh**

Sales follow strong branding

As do more loyal customers

Mention the word *brand* and all kinds of companies leap to mind – Nike, Starbucks, BMW, Gap and Coke to name just a few. Branding has become very popular in business. Just about every business owner I have met over the last few months speaks about their branding strategy and the importance of brand to their success. But what is *branding* exactly?

One of my favourite definitions comes from Catherine Worrall, owner and creative director of Ideastream Design (www.ideastreamdesign.com), an award-winning brand strategy firm in Vancouver.

She says, “Brand is the conversation people have about you when you are not in the room. It is what people think and feel when they hear your company name or see your product. Where a company, product or service has a recognized brand, it creates visibility, credibility and profitability.”

A lot of people think that branding is only for the big corporate players with huge budgets to spend. Not so. Lots of companies start building significant brands when they are just starting out. The Great Little Box

Company and Men in Kilts Home Services are two that come to mind; both these companies paid significant attention to their brand from the time they started business. Jane Langton, a realtor with Prudential Sussex Realty (www.janesellshomes.ca), says that she branded her business shortly after she started her real estate career. “I wanted to create an image that described my business and created easy recognition. I did this to set myself apart from everyone else in the market. It keeps me top of mind with my customers and has been a great marketing tool for attracting new business.”

Ideastream Design has created successful brand strategies for all sizes of companies from start-up to multi-million dollar enterprises and Catherine says a solid branding strategy is fundamental for sales success. “If you open a retail store, you would never consider not having a sign out front to catch the attention of people and to announce your presence. Operating a company without a strong corporate brand or product brand is exactly like doing that.” Branding doesn’t do the selling for you and won’t fix your sales challenges directly, but a strong brand will impact

your sales by:

- Allowing you to ask a higher selling price. By being branded you are not a commodity any more and research shows that many customers will pay six to 12 percent more for branded goods and services
- Shorten your sales cycle. Branding creates an image in the buyers’ mind that helps them make a buying decision.
- Successful branding drives word of mouth in the market which means your marketing dollars go further. Third-party endorsements are the most valuable marketing tool.
- Increasing customer loyalty. Loyal customers are like money in the bank; it costs a lot more to find new customers than it does to keep existing ones.

Catherine finished up our conversation by outlining three key things to consider whenever you are building a brand or rebranding:

1. Define who you are. What is the purpose of your company, product or service? What is your corporate personality? What do you promise to

deliver? What do you stand for?

2. Stand out. What differentiates you from the competition? What is unique about you that customers will respond to? What need do you provide a solution for?

3. Be clear on who wants what you have. A successful brand creates a relationship with its customers. What is important to your customers? What motivates them to buy? Know who your best customer is and put your focus there – don’t try to please everyone.

Good branding is not about spending pots of money – it is about getting clear on what you sell and who you sell to. Developing a strong brand is good sales strategy. It goes a long way to establishing trust and credibility with your customer.

Fiona Walsh is one of only three business coaches in North America approved to provide the highly successful and popular Ghost CEO coaching program. An expert in sales and business development, she offers tips for growing your business at www.fmw Walsh.com.

The Sales Quiz



1. Too many prospects wanting to “Think it over”?
2. Do you find you are doing “Unpaid consulting”?
3. Are your prices getting “Shopped” around town?
4. Is your Sales Cycle far too long?
5. Problems being assertive (You lose control of the sale)?
6. Cold calls are ineffective so you just don’t make them?
7. Prospects lie when you thought they were being truthful?

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